

## ACADEMIC APPEALS POLICY RELATING TO GRADE CHALLENGES

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1. The policy outlined in this document is only for resolution of academic appeals related to grade challenges. All undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled in courses offered by the University may submit an appeal relating to a grade challenge.
2. Grounds for a grade challenge appeal:
  - a. Mitigating circumstances exist. Mitigating circumstances claims must be supported by medical or other documentary evidence acceptable to the Academic Appeals Committee (AAC);
  - b. A procedural irregularity occurred;
  - c. A decision was manifestly unreasonable or influenced by prejudice or bias, or perception thereof, on the part of the decision-maker(s).
3. All grounds must be supported by evidence.
4. In line with the policies of the OIA and higher education practice, a student may not appeal matters of academic judgment.
5. Any student using the appeal process to bring frivolous or vexatious matters to the University's attention will be subject to disciplinary action.
6. Any student found to have provided fraudulent evidence or falsified a claim will be subject to disciplinary action.
7. Appeals require time to be processed correctly. Appeals may result in delays in the confirmation of grades which may have an impact on progression and the timing of the completion of studies/graduation.
8. Information will be used and retained in line with the [University Privacy Policy](#).
9. A grade challenge cannot be made to the Associate Dean or designee by a student if they have been found guilty of academic misconduct in an exam sitting with evidence. For example, if an invigilator finds a student to be using a mobile phone or smart watch, or written notes in an exam room, there is physical evidence to confirm that academic misconduct has occurred.

### Stage I: Informal Grade Challenge to Instructor

10. Any student may request an explanation of how a grade has been calculated for any piece of assessed work from their instructor. Such an explanation does not form part

of the grade challenges and appeals procedures and is a routine and regular part of feedback to students. An instructor may revise a grade at this stage, at the instructor's discretion.

11. A student who wishes to request the re-evaluation of a grade, based on the grounds listed above, should contact the instructor of the course within 5 working days of the grade's issuance and ask for specific clarification of the issue concerned. A student would normally be expected to have met with an instructor for feedback before making a challenge request.
12. The University expects resolution within 5 working days of the challenge request, though there may be a reasonable delay if the instructor is on annual leave or if the University is closed.
13. If the instructor is no longer in the employ of Richmond University or is unavailable for other reasons, the student will meet with the relevant Associate Dean, or an alternative (such as Head of Department or equivalent) designated by the Associate Dean.
14. If the student does not receive a satisfactory outcome, the student may file a formal grade challenge to the relevant Associate Dean, or an alternative (such as Head of Department or equivalent) designated by the Associate Dean within 5 working days of the outcome.

## **Stage II: Grade Challenge to Associate Dean**

15. The student presents a written statement outlining the grounds for the grade challenge to the Associate Dean of the relevant School, or their designee, for consideration. This should be done within 5 working days from the instructor's response to the grade challenge/ 15 calendar days of the original grade release. For the avoidance of doubt, academic judgement may not be appealed when making a grade challenge.
16. An informal meeting may be called at this time by the Associate Dean if necessary. A student may be accompanied to the meeting by a supporter or a registered student of the University. The supporter may prompt or provide advice directly to the student, but may not address the group members unless invited to do so by the Associate Dean.
17. The Associate Dean, or a designee, will make a determination as to the merits of the grade challenge and attempt a resolution. He/she will prepare a written record and

this will be provided to all parties, in writing, normally within 5 working days from the start of Stage II/20 calendar days of the original grade release.

18. There may be a delay in the decision if a meeting or further investigation is required. The student will be informed of the timeframe.

### Stage III: The Appeal

19. A student may formally appeal a Stage II grade challenge to the Academic Appeals Committee (AAC). This appeal must be lodged within 5 working days of the Stage II decision using the grade appeals form, along with appropriate supporting evidence.
20. Students must have exhausted the Informal Stages before proceeding to the Appeal.
21. Only the student about whom a decision has been made can lodge an appeal against that decision. Appeals from third parties are not accepted.
22. Students cannot normally submit an appeal after they have been presented to the University Exam Board to ratify their degree or exit award.
23. The AAC secretary will make an initial determination on administrative grounds whether or not the case can proceed to the Committee. An appeal may not be considered if there is no substantive case for the Committee provided to hear, no evidence is provided, or if there is no valid remedy open to the Committee.
24. If a case is to be heard by the Committee, a meeting will be scheduled normally within 10 working days of receipt of a complete appeal. The Committee will normally expect to resolve a case at this meeting, and a decision notice will be sent to the student within 5 working days from the meeting date. The Committee may delay or postpone a meeting to allow further evidence to be gathered; this will be communicated to the student.
25. In the rare event that a formally-instituted hearing is deemed to be necessary, this will be held within 15 working days of the receipt of a complete appeal.
26. At the hearing, the student and faculty member may offer explanations of the situation to AAC, and the Committee members may ask questions of each. The Committee may also call upon other faculty members, staff or students to ask questions of them that will clarify any additional aspects of the case indicated.
27. A student may be accompanied to the meeting by a supporter. The supporter may prompt or provide advice to the student, but may not address the hearing committee unless invited to do so by the Chair.

28. The Chair of the AAC will prepare a written report on the AAC's decision made at the hearing, and a copy of this report will be provided to the student, Associate Dean, and the Academic Registrar, within 5 working days of the AAC hearing.
29. All AAC outcomes will be recorded in the reserved minutes of the AAC.
30. All documents and evidence submitted by a student in support of an appeal will be treated as confidential and only seen by those directly involved in the appeal process

#### **Stage IV: Further Appeal to the Office of the Provost**

31. A student who chooses to appeal the decision of the AAC may lodge a "Further Appeal" with the Office of the Provost. Only after all methods for settlement at the level of the Academic Appeals Committee have been exhausted can the student lodge a further appeal.
32. The Office of the Provost will receive information from parties involved in a further appeal, and conduct any further investigations or convene hearings deemed necessary.
33. The grounds for Further Appeal are:
  - a. New evidence exists that you could not have reasonably presented in your appeal to the AAC;
  - b. A procedural irregularity occurred in the conduct of the appeal process;
  - c. A decision was manifestly unreasonable or influenced by prejudice or bias, or perception thereof, on the part of the decision-maker(s).
34. Further Appeal procedures are as follows:
  - a. The student must file a Further Appeal Form to the Office of the Provost requesting a review of AAC's decision within 5 working days;
  - b. If the Further Appeal is on the grounds of supplying new evidence then this must be presented with the form;
  - c. The Office of the Provost will review the material presented at the original AAC meeting plus any additional information provided by the student;
  - d. The Office of the Provost will request additional information if necessary, and may pause the timeframes to allow this to be gathered and reviewed;
  - e. The Office of the Provost will make a final determination within 10 working days and the student will be informed of the outcome.
35. At this point the University's institutional procedures for appeals have been completed. The Completion of Procedures letter will outline for the student the role of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

36. If, upon the conclusion the University's institutional procedures the student is dissatisfied with the decision, they may take their appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (<http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>). Students must first have exhausted all appropriate internal procedures at the University before approaching the OIA.

### **Special Cases: Mitigating Circumstance during a Final Assessment**

37. It is the assumption that if a student submits a piece of assessment or sits an exam, they are fit to do so and take responsibility for the grade received.
38. In the rare event that a mitigating circumstance did arise as the student submitted the piece of assessment or sat the exam, and the student wishes to challenge the grade received based on the mitigating circumstance, the student would need to explicitly demonstrate that s/he had an evidenced mitigating circumstance that would have affected the rational judgement necessary to deem her/himself unfit to submit or sit the assessment(s).
39. If a grade challenge is based on this circumstance, the challenge with the evidence of mitigating circumstance should be submitted to the Associate Dean (Stage II) within 5 working days of the grade release. If the Associate Dean was the instructor, it should be submitted to the Dean instead.
40. If evidence cannot be produced within the timeframe, the student should still submit the challenge and the final date by which evidence can be submitted will be determined by the Associate Dean or designee. The student will need to read the [Mitigating Circumstance Guidance](#).
41. The Associate Dean cannot make an academic judgement on the extent to which any mitigating circumstances might have affected a student's performance. If the mitigating circumstance claim is accepted by the Associate Dean then they will consider providing an alternative opportunity/alternative solution in consultation with Registry Services.
42. The Associate Dean or designee will prepare a written record of the result and this will be provided to the student and instructor.
43. All decisions will be presented at the subsequent School Exam Board and University Exam Board.

44. If the challenge is not resolved to the student’s satisfaction, the student will indicate this in writing to the Academic Appeals Committee using the Grade Appeals form within 5 working days of the Associate Dean or designee’s decision and follow Stage II.

## VERSION MANAGEMENT

<b>Responsible Department: Department of Academic Affairs and accreditation (DAAQA)</b>			
<b>Approving body: Academic Board</b>			
<b>Version no.</b>	<b>Key Changes</b>	<b>Date of approval</b>	<b>Date of effect</b>
001		24 July 2018	28 August 2018
002	Corrected typos/updated date. Added point re: grade challenges and academic misconduct.	25 June 2020	11 August 2020
		<b>Restricted access?</b> Tick as appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	